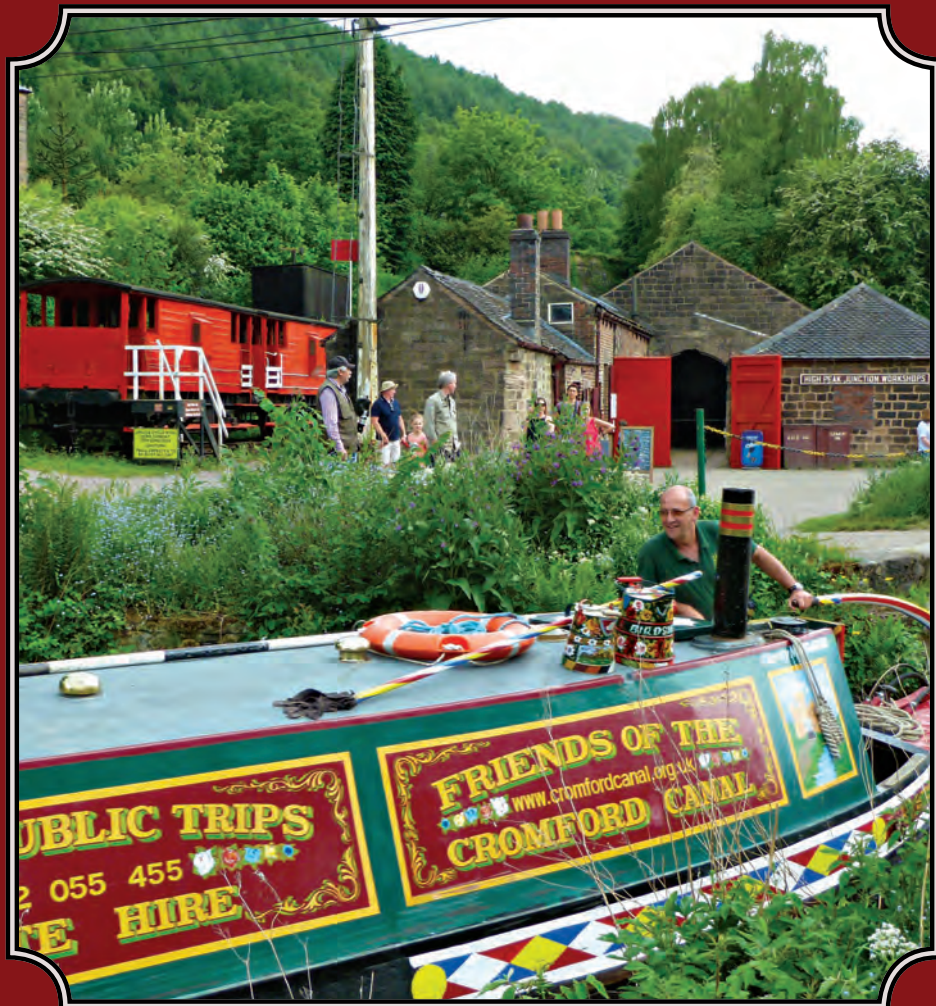


THE PORTAL

Issue 66 - Autumn 2018

Price £1.00 - Free to Members



Friends of the Cromford Canal

Registered Charity No. 1164608



CONTENTS

Editorial	4
Chairman's Notes	5
Membership Matters	6
Birdswood Update	7
Strategic Restoration Update	8
Cromford Garden Centre Wharf	9
News from the North	10
Leawood Jottings	12
Losing A Vital Facility	13
Work Party Report	16
Repairing Leaks at Cromford	19
Fox In The Hole	20
Tunnel Tales – Part 5	24
Arkwright and the Cromford Canal	26
IWPS Canal Scheme	28
Work at Whatstandwell	31
In and Around Cromford.	32
Autumn Events	35

Front Cover

Clive steers Birdswood on one of her regular trips past High Peak Junction, where the two brake vans have been recently refurbished – see page 10. The workshop doors have since been painted the darker 'Midland' red.

Photo: Hugh Potter

Back Cover

The certificate presented to FCC by the children of Chernobyl as a 'thank you' for the annual trips that Birdswood offers them – see page 7.

The aims and objectives of the Friends of the Cromford Canal



The restoration, reconstruction, preservation and maintenance of the Cromford Canal, its associated buildings, towing path, structures and craft and the conservation of its natural character as a navigable inland waterway system for the benefit of the public.



EDITORIAL

by Hugh Potter

Is there anybody out there?

When I worked in editing (for a living) I always used to reckon that if you wanted response from readers you had to make mistakes. We did, but they were usually not deliberate. So when, following the dispatch of the last issue of Portal, I received not a single email, letter or phone call from our nigh-on 1,000 members, I did wonder if it had actually reached them. Surely it was not perfect?? Or was it too boring to read?

And the request for a variety of volunteers to help out in various roles within FCC was met with a resounding silence too, although I am delighted to report that as we went to press Alan Oakley stepped forward to co-ordinate maintenance work on Birdswood. I am sure he would welcome some assistance



– you can contact him initially via volunteering@cromfordcanal.org.

Do members have any thoughts or photographs of the canal that they would like to share? Have you had a good walk along it recently? Have you noticed the improvements carried out by our hard-working work party? Or

perhaps the wonderful work that is happening around the locks at Ironville, Codnor Park and Jacksdale, about which we do not get reports? Have you had a trip on Birdswood? Have you seen any unusual wildlife?

When you've read this issue, please do think about getting in touch – it would be nice to know that there is someone out there!

Copy date for Issue 67 is November 14th



Stop Press

At the beginning of September some forty volunteers from Rolls Royce descended on Cromford to help the Arkwright Society. In one day they cleared the troublesome loose gravel that had been laid in front of Wheatcroft's Wharf (buggies and wheelchairs had really struggled on it) and replaced the decaying bridge that leads from the wharf – close to where Birdswood starts her trips – up to the Gothic Warehouse. I wonder if they fancy reed-pulling this winter ... ?



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

by John Baylis BEM

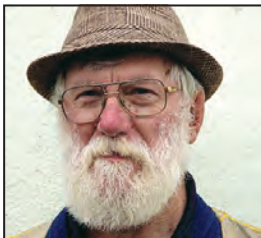
A review of FCC's work over the summer

In my last Chairman's Notes I reported on the work that the Strategic Restoration Committee had put into the application for a Water Environment Grant to restore the waterway through the Smotherfly site. Despite two brief notes that judging is ongoing, the original reporting dates are well

past but still we have no news on whether or not our application has been successful and going to the next stage or has failed. We believe that some applicants have been told that they have gone to the next stage and some that they have failed; so maybe no news is good news.

In the Spring Portal I mentioned that we were purchasing a strip of land and a right of way at Langley Mill to allow sufficient room for the turn into the bridge under the A610 road and access for plant and materials from Cromford Road. I was hoping to announce that the purchase had been completed at the AGM in April, but Shire Developments, the sellers, have asked that they delay until March 2019 when the 'betterment clause' in their purchase from the previous owners expires. As the new planning application has not yet been submitted and there is no urgency on our part we have agreed to the delay.

In this issue, John Guyler reports on the many and varied sites where our volunteers have been working; this is most valuable when applying for grants. To add to this is the amount of work and time that other volunteers put into Birdsworth which had its busiest month so far in June this year; so thanks to all our volunteers during this busy summer. John mentioned the work we had done on installing the new stop planks at the Derwent Aqueduct. Although maintaining a better water level for



Birdsworth, Derbyshire County Council are still getting too much leakage through the crown of the arches underneath and we are discussing possible mitigation works with them.

After many months of being shored up with scaffolding, the roof of the extension to the

Wharf Shed at High Peak Junction has been removed, all the rotten timber replaced and the original tiles re-laid; this has been an expensive job for DCC, and its staff are to be congratulated on the quality of the work. This will be followed with similar work on the roof of Leawood Pumping Station and some work to Browns Swing bridge at High Peak Junction.

For those of you who walk round Codnor Park Reservoir and wonder where the notice boards have gone, the Friends work party has offered to paint them and fit new perspex windows. The latter are from an anonymous donor who regularly visits the café.



One of the two noticeboards at Codnor Park Reservoir that have been taken away for refurbishment.

Photo: Hugh Potter



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

by Yvonne Shattower

An update on GDPR

The last few weeks have been taken up with analysing the information on the GDPR forms that were sent out in April. It has been a very long, but interesting exercise, with quite a few challenges in deciphering some of the email addresses.



Approximately half of the forms were not returned. The new GDPR Act is not retrospective so if you have received Portal by email in the past, but have not returned the green form, you will in future get a paper copy through the post.

384 forms were returned. Of these, 85 members have opted to receive the Portal by email, and hopefully this will now be in place. 158 of you have opted to receive email information on Engineering and Restoration, and 115 have asked for email information on Birdswood. Most people seem happy to receive yearly accounts information by email or on the web site, which will save the Friends a great deal of money in the years to come. Where joint members have asked for information to be sent to more than one email address, both should receive the requested information.

I have mentioned challenges in extracting the information. Several of the forms asked for contact by email, but gave no email address. Others gave an email address with no other information, and on quite a few I had to use a bit of ingenuity to decipher the dots, hyphens or underscores of the address. Most Members seem to be happy to receive information and contact from us by post. It was interesting to find several forms saying that members did not need the accounts and financial information sent out annually.

One of the important areas that these forms highlighted is the need to keep us up to date with your contact information. When I compared email addresses with the ones I currently hold, many were totally different. It is now even more important to update me with your postal and email contact details when they change.

Hopefully I have got all the right information in the right boxes but should you want to change your options at any time please let me know. It is not too late to return the form if you still have it. As always, my contact details are in the front of the magazine.

Our Monday evening meetings at Ironville Church Hall have resumed after the summer break. In October a representative from Canal & River Trust will be talking to us about their approach to restoration with particular reference to the East Midlands canals. Canal & River Trust have undergone a recent staff and area re-organisation, so it will be interesting to hear their latest views.

I have, in the last couple of Portals, mentioned our disappointment at the low numbers of members attending these meetings, so we are hoping that our numbers will increase now that the football has finished. As I have said before, it is not just the talk that you can enjoy, there is also the opportunity to ask trustees and committee members any questions you may have about the FCC and our work to restore this lovely canal. All the meetings start at 7.30pm and are held at the Ironville Church Hall, Casson Street, NG16 5NN. Admission is £2 for members and non members, who are very welcome to attend. Tea and coffee are available, and there is usually a bar and raffle, so why not give it a try and come along and join us.



BIRDWOOD UPDATE

by Mike Kelley

Some thoughts from Birdswood's Project Manager

The outstanding success of Birdswood continues to grow apace. There are many canal societies who would give their eye teeth to have the high public profile we enjoy. Located in a popular tourist area, and a World Heritage Site, people visit the north end of the Cromford Canal by their thousands throughout the year. Most of these people will read on the side of Birdswood the words, 'Friends of the Cromford Canal' and will immediately know that there is a group dedicated to the restoration of this wonderful canal. Likewise those who pay to become a passenger on this boat are all informed that their trip money is going toward the restoration and maintenance of this canal.

For example, during the month of June this year we carried 1,534 passengers; the highest monthly total, for any month, since we started. Also for May, June and July the passenger numbers for each of those three months are the highest yet recorded. Up to July 2018 we have carried a grand total of 32,121 passengers. A proud figure indeed.

Similarly, within the boat there is a donation bucket clearly labelled with the FCC logo, and so far (July 2018) the donations from the public to the FCC this year amount to a wonderful £2,090.17p.

Of course with a high profile project such as this there are problems, but to me a problem is just something waiting for a solution. My philosophy in life has been "Don't give me the problem, give me the solution". One of our problems is to get enough volunteers to run the boat for up to six days a week, when one day can be eight hours long. Also the time demands on the volunteer Boat Masters (Skippers) can be excessive, yet for five years of our operation not only have these demands

been met, they have been exceeded. So, if you would like to join our wonderful team of volunteers please contact our Operations Manager, Vix Wilding (address on inside front cover). Then there is the maintenance of the boat, something we are still short of volunteers for at the moment.

An unexpected problem is that one or two of the FCC's trustees, who are ultimately responsible for the running of both the FCC and Birdswood, have been heard to say Birdswood is detracting us from our main aim of canal restoration! Forgive me if I disagree with that. They have also posed the question "Is all the time, and overhead expenses of Birdswood worth it? Maybe we should concentrate our efforts on obtaining grants". These are fair questions that deserve consideration and discussion, but for me the answer is clear.



In August Birdswood laid on a special trip for 'Chernobyl Children' who visit the area each year as part of their ongoing recuperation. They were so pleased with the trip that they gave gifts to the crew and presented FCC with a special certificate, which Mike Kelley is seen here receiving (see also back cover).



STRATEGIC RESTORATION UPDATE

by George Rogers

What's going on 'behind the scenes'

Firstly, I'd like to remind members that read my last article in Portal (and indeed any who didn't!) that I would really like to receive any comments you have on the Restoration Principles that I presented at the AGM. It is ultimately for the members that we aim to restore the canal, so we really do want to understand what you want, like or dislike about what we are doing or the direction we are taking. Due to space constraints in the last edition, the editor wasn't able to print the explanatory notes that I wrote to go with them, so we have uploaded these onto the website (along with the Restoration Principles themselves) should you wish to peruse them.

Secondly, what else has happened in the last few months? We still await the outcome of the Water Environment Grant that we have applied for to complete the works at Smotherfly. We were originally expecting to have a decision by now, but in the latest update received this has been pushed back due to the volume of applications received. The good news is that we have made it past the first hurdle of the initial technical checks, but there is no steer yet as to whether we will be successful or not. The most likely outcome before the next edition of Portal is that we will be asked to provide further clarifications, particularly on the costed elements – but thankfully with a 60 day return period rather than the 20 day turn around we ended up with for the original application!

Whilst waiting for news on Smotherfly, we have continued with work in three areas: preparing the planning application for the extension northwards at Langley Mill, reviewing where we are at overall and also starting to review the Economic Development Study.

Taking those in reverse order, the final draft of the EDS has now been received after an unfortunate and lengthy delay. The SRC has had initial discussions about the format and the conclusions of the report and



how these could be used to develop the wider restoration strategy of the canal from Langley Mill to Butterley and Pinxton, and these will continue over the coming months. In the interim, various members of the SRC and the wider FCC have been asked to proof read the 23 chapters of the report to spot any glaring mistakes and to help summarise the report to the rest of the group.

Alongside this work, we spent a very useful meeting reviewing a 'work stages' document produced some years ago by the IWA and CRT. This highlights what these two organisations believe a canal restoration society should be looking to achieve at each stage (ranging from inception, through development, construction and maintenance) across a broad range of headings. We were well advanced in some areas and less so in others, and the exercise highlighted some interesting holes in either our knowledge or our presentation, and these holes will be actioned in the coming months.

Finally, to Langley Mill. A subset of the SRC, dominated by the civil engineering core, continue to prepare the planning application for the Langley Mill extension. This is coming together very nicely and we hope to be in a position to have pre-application meetings with both Amber Valley and Broxtowe borough councils (the two planning authorities, it being a cross-border application) early October. At that point we can present our initial application and they can give us some idea of exactly where they think the application is strong or weak before we submit formally. The technical detail is all a little boring for this report but will be available in full on the planning authority websites for perusal and comment when the application is submitted.

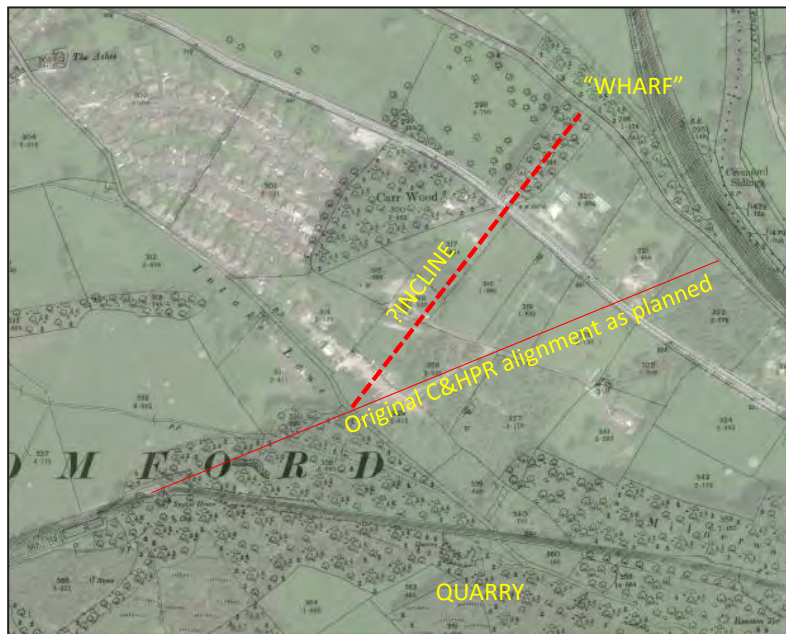
As always, we continue to seek new members so if anyone is interested in helping out in any way, even if you don't know what skills you have to offer or how you could be of help, please get in touch.



CROMFORD GARDEN CENTRE WHARF

by Hugh Potter

Why did the garden centre have a wharf?



An overlay of early OS and satellite maps from the National Library of Scotland website, with the proposed railway's route and the original planned route of the CHPR shown.

Every time I steer Birdwood past 'Stella' the Stegosaurus and slow down so that passengers can see her properly, I have wondered just why the former Cromford Garden Centre has a canal wharf. Was it so that the earlier trip boats could stop there? Or is it far older?

Well, Trevor Griffin has what he calls a 'fanciful theory' about this mystery wharf. I will quote his words:

"The evidence is very poor but I could 'see' a potential incline leading up from this point on the canal to Intake Lane when I lived at Cromford Station House. There is the dramatic quarry on Intake Lane that was later built through by the Cromford & High Peak Railway. My thought is that stone could have been brought down the hillside to the canal

when it was under construction by this means, a temporary unrecorded railway. There is no evidence on the ground or the road, and the C&HPR cut through it later. Sanderson's map of 1835 shows nothing. Incidentally, the original deposited plan for the C&HPR shows it taking a much steeper alignment down to the canal."

I asked our 'resident' stone expert, Grenville Smith, who thought this was plausible and added: "It would make sense to have a source of building stone that did not have to cross the river. Otherwise stone from sites I am familiar with such as White Tor and Lea Wood would have had to be carried all the way to Cromford Bridge and back again."

Do any members have further thoughts on this?



NEWS FROM THE NORTH

by Mark Brailsford

Derbyshire County Council Countryside Service's update on the Cromford to Ambergate section

We encourage you to make the most of the Cromford Canal and High Peak Trail this autumn; please join us for one of the events below. As an incentive pick up the Derbyshire County Council Events brochure and you could have a cup of tea on us. You'll find a buy one get one free hot drink voucher that can be used on the canal at High Peak Junction or at Middleton Top visitor centre. Here we also have a £5 off voucher if you hire two or more bikes to explore the beautiful, flower-rich High Peak Trail.

Discovery Days in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

Saturday 27th October to Sunday 4th November

Lots of family activities, including walks, workshops and talks. Learn about the World Heritage Site in informative and entertaining ways. Something for all ages and many events are free. In the final weekend, enjoy a host of activities around Cromford and Masson Mills, the canal and in Cromford village.

High Peak Junction Open Day

**Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th November
11am-3pm. Turn up any time.**

Visit the oldest railway workshops in the world and see them come alive. Learn the fascinating history of the building and the industry it served. Have a go at being a blacksmith on the historic forge and make a poker to take home and keep. Free workshop entry and Heritage Audio Tour. £10 charge to make a poker. Also that weekend Birdwood, the horse-drawn canal boat, will be in operation, with lots of

activities at Cromford Wharf, organised by the Friends of Cromford Canal.

Water Levels

Derwent Aqueduct near Leawood Pump is still leaking and canal water is being lost through each of its three spans. The flow appears to reduce some days and increase on others, with no logic as to why. Further investigation is planned for November when we can drop the levels after Birdwood has stopped running. We are also looking at getting quotes to de-vegetate the walls of the aqueduct itself.

The leak at Cromford Wharf will be looked at in November, to do what repairs we can to stop the water flowing onto the car park.

There are also plans to get a contractor in



Inside one of the rather finely restored brake vans at High Peak Junction, which you can now walk right through.

Photo: Hugh Potter



*The canopy adjacent to the Wharf Shed before and after work had been carried out. Note the cross-bracing that has been added. At the end of August it was awaiting a final coat of paint on the metalwork.
Photos: Hugh Potter*



with a digger to remove reed from between the river and railway aqueducts this winter.

Planned structural works

The Wharf Shed canopy has now been re-roofed, and work has been completed to restore the wheel pit adjacent to High Peak Junction workshops thanks to a grant from Natural England.

Leawood Pump House's rotten roof timbers are to be replaced, with work starting mid-September, estimated to take 6 weeks. This will mean that the pump house is unlikely to be open for the rest of this year.

Middleton Top boiler house roof is also awaiting repairs.

Volunteer work parties – Thank you

The FCC volunteers have been busy through

the summer clearing out silt traps, painting fencing around the Leawood area, and pulling up Himalayan Balsam.

New Interpretation Boards

DCC is working closely with FCC, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, and DerwentWISE to produce new site interpretation for the canal at Whatstandwell and Ambergate.

Work is continuing on the interpretation of the recently restored brake vans and the incline, including the Cromford and Sheep Pasture engine houses, with support from DerwentWISE.

Get in Touch

You can contact DCC Countryside Service at Middleton Top Visitor Centre on **01629 533298**.



LEAWOOD JOTTINGS

by Ian Yates

Major repair work is planned for the engine house

Up to now this year things have been rather slow. We have not had the usual number of visitors for some reason. One factor has probably been the hot weather as people tend to stay in the shade rather than venture out. The August bank holiday steaming was hit by the heavy rain on the Sunday but the Monday was a good day.

The main news is that the much awaited repairs to the engine house roof are imminent. A contractor has been appointed and a meeting with them and Derbyshire County Council has finalised details. We are mainly concerned that the engine is well protected, as the whole roof is to be removed and replaced, which will be a major job. The rubbish and clutter at the rear of the engine house has already been moved clear and the vegetation, mainly Himalayan Balsam, has been strimmed. The works are to start in the second half of September for 6-12 weeks depending on what is found when the roof has been taken off. During this time access

to the pump house will not be possible and the whole area will not be accessible to the public.

A temporary bridge from the far side of the canal will give contractors access whilst maintaining the public footpath along the towpath and allowing Birdswood to moor. The concessionary footpath on the opposite side will be closed.

As usual we are always on the lookout for volunteers to help look after and work on the engine and boilers. Whilst this is generally day to day maintenance and cleaning work, sometimes more extensive and interesting work can come along. Whilst getting dirty is optional it is not always necessary. During the work, an initial contact with Middleton Top on 01629 533298 should be made; they will put you in touch with us. There are no joining fees; just provide your own safety boots and overalls. Refreshments are taken at the end of each Monday working session in the quiet atmosphere of the engine house.



The last steaming of 2018 was scheduled to take place on 15th-16th September; the pump house will be closed after that for repairs to the roof.

Photo: Hugh Potter



LOSING A VITAL FACILITY

by Hugh Potter

Kempson's boats were still trading from Pye Bridge when the canal closed in 1944



The sad fate of the motor boat Mayflower (r) and butty Excellent, which had been used by Kempson's until the canal was closed. They had been built by Rudkins of Leicester in 1926 and 1921 respectively. They were left to sink in the bottom pound of the canal, with Lock 13 seen in the background.

Apart from coal boats loaded at Beggarlee Wharf, just above Langley Bridge Lock, the last boats to trade on the Cromford Canal were operated by Kempson's of Pye Bridge. In June 1944 during the debate about the potential effect of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway Co's Bill to close several of its canals, Sir Herbert Wragg (MP for Belper) wrote to Mr Noel-Baker (Minister of War Transport) enclosing a document from Kempson's which explained the importance of the canal to them. This offers us a rare record of how traffic operated on the canal in the 20th century.

Kempson & Co Ltd

"These works were erected in 1878 to distil gas tar and ammoniacal liquor produced at various gas works in the district. The business has been carried on continuously ever since. The works were established here in order to secure canal facilities for transport and to get supplies of water for cooling purposes. The canal was a decisive factor in the choice of this site. The canal was used for bringing tar and liquor from various places,

but latterly practically only one works has needed the facility of canal transport. That is Loughborough Corporation Gas Works. We have occasionally used the canal for bringing tar from London and elsewhere. Whilst it is some years since that was done, the possibility of again doing so will be taken from us once the canal is finally closed.

"We have our own motor driven tank barge and this tows a butty barge. The total carrying capacity of the two barges is 45 tons. Owing to the low state of the water in the canal, for some time they have not been able to carry more than 40 tons and the last time were only loaded to 35 tons capacity.

"The canal is particularly valuable to us for the carrying of tar which we purchase from Loughborough. We have held this contract continuously since these works were started. The quantity involved is 1,548 tons per annum (last year's figure). The Loughborough Gas Works have no connection with the railway and have no siding facilities. They have direct access to the canal and the tar is run straight into the barges. That has been an important

factor in our ability to take this raw material. As this raw material is subject to competitive buying, our position to take by canal has been and will be an extremely important matter to us. If we lose that source of supply of tar, we cannot replace it. The quantity represents an important percentage of our total intake. A further reason for our anxiety to retain the canal is the very much lower cost of transporting tar by barge than by road which is the only alternative way. The present cost by barge from Loughborough to Pye Bridge is 5/4 [27p] per ton. The present cost by road is 9/11 [50p] per ton, a difference of 4/7 [23p] per ton equal to £354-15-0 [£350.75] per annum on last year's intake from Loughborough.



By the time Robert Aickman passed the boats in 1954 (the full story of which is told in my book The Cromford Canal), the boats had sunk further.

“We made a suggestion to the Railway Co that it may be a proposition to bring the tar by canal from Loughborough to Langley Mill and transport it from Langley Mill to our works by road. The canal distance between Pye Bridge and Langley Mill is about 5 miles. By road the distance is about 7½ miles. This possibility is being investigated at the present time. We do not at the moment know what the cost will be in that way, but it is bound to be considerably

more than the through rate by canal. The tar will have to be pumped out of the barges into road tanks and brought here. Some form of power pump will be needed and of course road tanks. There will of course be difficulties about keeping the barges in order away from our works, in addition to other disabilities. The reason Langley Mill is suggested is that it is not proposed to close the canal up to that point as there is a considerable coal traffic on the canal from Messrs Barber & Walker's Collieries, and that will be the nearest point on the navigable canal to our works.

“Years ago we used the canal for sending pitch to Hull and Goole for shipment. Just before the present War we were investigating the matter again, this time using the Trent Navigation Co's facilities.

“At present we are the only users of the canal at Pye Bridge. The Stanton Co have used it for carrying pipes but are not now doing this. As far as we know we are the only users for transport purposes of the canal between Langley Mill and our works.

“A point the Railway Co will probably raise is that recently only a very small quantity has been going by canal. The traffic came to a stop at the end of December 1942 and was only resumed three months ago. This cessation was due solely to our inability to get barges to work our

barges owing to wartime shortage of that kind of labour. We tried all over the country and as far afield as Ireland. We have now overcome the problem and are able to use the canal if it is available. Our inability to use the canal during the time we were short of the necessary labour was a source of loss which we hoped we had got over until this question of the canal came along.

“Whilst our suggestion will be preferable

to losing the traffic altogether, it is bound to add very considerably to the cost and deprives us of loading facilities here if we need to use them. We consider that to make up for that as far as possible we should be adequately compensated. We can understand the Railway Co wanting to close the canal owing to the loss incurred in keeping it open, but by the saving in upkeep costs they will make, they are in effect obtaining an asset whilst we shall be losing a vital facility."

Ministerial Response

As you might infer, Kempson's did not seem unduly worried about the closure of the canal per se, only that they should not lose out financially. After a considerable delay, during which various notes were passed between Whitehall departments, along the lines of "What would we have to offer Kempson's to stop them opposing the Bill?" Mr Noel-Baker responded in September 1944 saying:

"I have looked into the matter, and I think that, owing to mining subsidence, it would be a very expensive luxury to keep the canal open as far as Kempson's works for a small volume of traffic as that which they have to

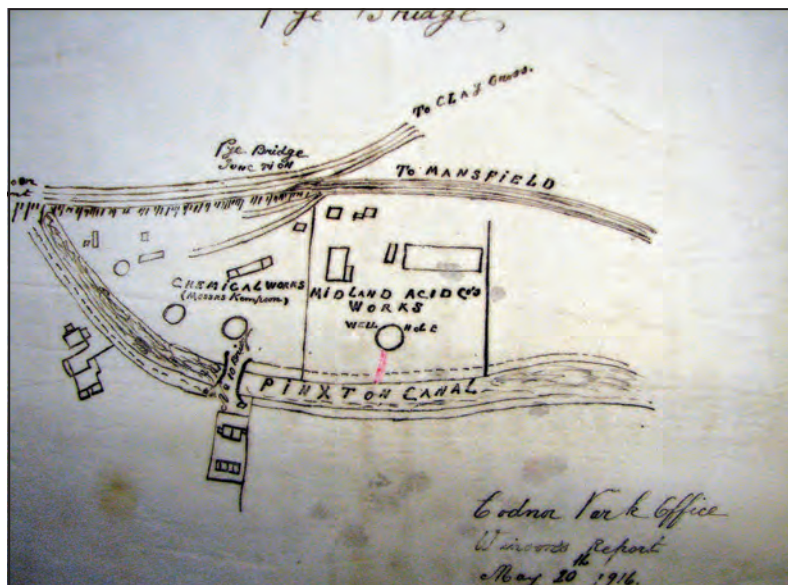
offer. Indeed, I think the solution must be excluded. I understand, however, that the LMS railway company are negotiating for the provision of alternative means of transport in compensation for the closing of the canal and I have every hope that a satisfactory arrangement will be arrived at."

Closures

The Bill was passed, closing a host of canals owned by the LMSR including the entire length of the Cromford Canal apart from the length below Lock 13, where coal was still being regularly loaded at Beggarlea Wharf from Moorgreen Colliery.

Exactly when the last load was carried to Kempson's is not known, although there is a rumour that the traffic continued after the official closure. Do any Friends have any photographs of these boats, or any further information about them?

Thanks to Grenville Smith for photographing these documents at The National Archives at Kew, where they are held as MT 52/132 - LMSR (Canals) Bill 1943-1944.



A hand-drawn map from 1916 showing Kempson's chemical works at Pye Bridge adjacent to the Midland Acid Works and Bridge 10 across the Pinxton Branch.



WORK PARTY REPORT

by John Guyler

A wide variety of jobs has been carried out

I have laid the work-party reports out in the date order that we have been operating, to give an insight into how many different activities are undertaken and the time scales we operate under. There are a number of activities omitted to save space.

There has been a trend for a few of the work parties to be split and to operate at different locations, due to job requirements and numbers of volunteers. But at the suggestion of some of the work-party volunteers it is now the policy to try to keep everyone in a reasonable area so that a group lunch break can be had. The lunch breaks are regarded as a social get together.

6th June: Ironville: the group of 12 was split into four working groups: clearing Himalayan Balsam near Codnor Park Reservoir; painting fences at Lock 4 all the way up towards Lock 2; painting the towpath gate and adjacent ironwork; replacing 16m of fencing top rail which had been identified as rotten.

12th June: Leawood Aqueduct: replacing the top board with cut out, in the stop planks.



Replacing the adjusted top plank at Leawood Aqueduct using 'saddles' to temporarily hold boards in place.

Photo: John Guyler

13th June: Cromford Wharf: clearing silt traps on offside, strimming around Stella [the 'pet' dinosaur that stands in the former Cromford Garden Centre and is now a big attraction

to younger passengers on Birdwood] and at various points on the opposite bank to the towpath; weeding on the wharf at Cromford.

20th June: High Peak Junction: painting and cutting back vegetation along the towpath.

23rd June: Clearing blocked drains at Cromford Wharf. For a number of weeks concern had been raised about water running out of the wharf retaining wall. Initially the problem was thought to be down to a blocked drain but on further investigation, suspicions were raised that



Painting the fence and towpath gate at Lock 4.

Photo: John Guyler



*Working on the FCC dumper.
Photo: John Guyler*

the canal was leaking. On entering the water wearing waders and a floatation device a hardy volunteer found several holes in the canal wall, which were quickly plugged with puddling clay. This has helped to reduce the problem but further long-term work will probably have to be planned. On the downside, John Baylis got his beloved drain rods stuck and they had to be left for another time to be retrieved.

27th June: Whatstandwell: the annual clearing of the Himalayan Balsam, which can grow to 2.5m tall from seed in one season. The reddish stems and pink-purple flowers make it very attractive, but it can take over in and around watercourses. It is very easy to pull out and has a root cluster like a grasping hand. A second group went to High Peak Junction, for painting fencing and working on the leak at Leawood Aqueduct. This meant puddling the clay into the aqueduct wall.

4th July: Another split work-party: repairing the steps to the western portal of Butterley Tunnel; timber and gravel infill had to be transported and then carried to site – a very heavy and difficult day. The other group went to Lower Hartshay, clearing Himalayan Balsam

which again was difficult because of access in the canal channel.

11th July: Lower Hartshay: the portal steps. Ironville: repainting FCC's 2-tonne dumper truck; Jack Brown had very kindly pumped the flat tyre up and charged the battery and then the scraping of the old paint began.

18th July: Lower Hartshay again, for Himalayan Balsam bashing, with a small group led by Chris Martin repairing and clearing the steps up to the A610, both sides of the road.

19th July: Sourcing and fitting new tyres on the dumper truck

21st July: Leawood Aqueduct: The Belper scuba diving team inspected the stop planks for leakage, remedial work undertaken and stop boards seated correctly.

25th July: Under the directions of John Baylis the small group successfully retrieved the drain rods, stuck in the drain at Cromford Wharf, using a device specially made for this operation.

25th July: Assisting the Waterway Recovery Group (WRG) on the Derby/ Sandiacre Canal at Borrowash. As part of a WRG week, FCC were asked to help moving and pouring concrete at a lock site under reconstruction. Twelve FCC volunteers turned up and those that weren't able to move concrete set to in their usual enthusiastic manner and started clearing a large length of scrub, undergrowth and saplings, a massive 1,600 sq m. Those that opted for concrete transporting using multiple wheel barrows had a very hard day. First thing it was the hottest day of the year, the concrete only had a short user time, so it had to be moved and laid 'quickly'. Also, when the mixer driver was discharging into the barrows, he filled them to the top, which made for an extremely heavy barrow. Then the first drops had to be made in an area which was only accessible via a 'Mickey Mouse Circuit' and at one point helpers had to pull the

barrow up a slope for dumping the load. Then, the second area to be filled was much closer and therefore a bit easier. That done and after a bit of head scratching the surplus concrete in the truck was used up on a hastily prepared area. Good job done. (It was discovered from the driver that it can be a very expensive exercise sending unwanted concrete back in the truck). Thanks were sent from the leader of the WRG work group to John Barker on the unstinting efforts of the FCC crew.

1st August: Ironville: finish painting the dumper and re-attaching the roll bar, which had obviously seen action because it had to be crow-barred into position.

1st August: High Peak Junction: more painting and cutting back brambles, particularly at Lawn Bridge and the swing bridge. The passengers on Birdswood were complaining about not being able to see [and being attacked by passing vegetation! – Ed].

8th August: High Peak Junction, even more painting outside the pumping house and removing weeds in and around the aqueduct.

15th August: Ironville: fence painting up towards Codnor Park Reservoir, with clearance of brambles, nettles and other summer growth necessary to allow the painters inside the fence. It was noted that some of the top rails needed replacing in addition to the others that were replaced a couple of months ago. The timber was ordered from Canal & River Trust (CRT). Also on this work-party one bag of litter was collected and one large bag of dog foul from the bin provided; not the best of jobs but a very worthwhile one when consideration of how clean the whole area is being kept by the community users and other volunteers.

22nd August: Ironville: Replaced 20m of top rail and two posts, and painted 130m of fencing up towards Codnor Park Reservoir from Lock 2.

The next couple of years, hopefully, will see new areas requiring the attention of the FCC work-parties.

Every month I collect all the FCC volunteer hours and the work-party hours are sent Watersidecare and CRT. The accounting

year 2017–18 has been a record year for volunteers at CRT, clocking up more than 600,000 hours. I am very proud to say we are part of that number; so far this year work-parties for the FCC have given over 1,700 hours, not including travel time.

If you feel that you may be able to give some time and participate in a worthwhile, social activity, which allows you to visit areas that may not be on your visiting list, to have some exercise (there's plenty of walking) but working at your own pace, on activities that suit you, please contact John Barker at work@cromfordcanal.org or 01773 760358.



Stella the Stegosaurus is popular with younger Birdswood passengers and has been prevented from disappearing into the undergrowth thanks to a work party in June.

Photo: Hugh Potter



REPAIRING LEAKS AT LEAWOOD

by Martin Culley

FCC assisted DCC in preventing water loss

There are numerous leaks throughout the canal but it was known that there were some significant problems around Leawood Aqueduct.

There is a constant balance between the level of water that Derbyshire County Council would like, to minimise leaks, and the level necessary for Birdsworth to navigate the canal. Just prior to undertaking this work, the boat had had to complete its journey's in reverse because there was insufficient water to turn in the winding hole.

The first suggested task was to reseal the new stop boards at the northern end of the aqueduct, as it was thought that there might be debris between them. An additional board was placed at the southern end of the aqueduct to raise the level, as a temporary measure, in view of the leaks and apparent fragility of the structure.

The boards could then be lifted, cleared and reset with 'saddles' to initially hold them in place until the temporary board at the southern end was removed and the aqueduct level dropped to its usual.

This reduced the leak considerably, but at the same time we noted a more significant amount of water flowing around the adjacent sluice, some coming through the sides and some coming through a pipe apparently placed as a land drain at the time the footbridge was refurbished.

Clearly, therefore, water has been seeping for some considerable time. As a temporary measure, DCC rangers placed a plastic sheet and sandbags against the canal wall adjacent to the sluice and this did noticeably reduce the flow.

A work-party was arranged to insert puddling clay (stored nearby) as a more long-term measure. A DCC ranger used the

small tractor to deliver the clay to the water's edge, although this had the unfortunate consequence of dislodging some already sunken edging stones, which had to be re-seated, not a very easy task with such heavy blocks and limited space. It also revealed how roughly the general structure was originally put together.

The initial plan was to use large plywood sheets, held by two of us in the water (waders courtesy of DCC) at a gap in the canal wall, whilst others shovelled in and compacted the clay. However, it proved very difficult to prevent the weight of the clay and the effect of the compaction (standing on the clay layers at intervals) from pushing the boards out. Moreover the clay proved to be such poor quality with stones and grit, that it did not stick as intended. Standing in the canal, we pushed some clay into obvious gaps in the wall and behind the re-seated stones, but otherwise, the only solution was to build a sloping bank within the canal and allow it to settle. This stretched from the corner of the sluice initially two metres along the bank and after a second work-party a week later, a total of four metres.

As we worked it was evident the flow was reducing and the level appeared to have been retained better since, although there are clearly numerous other leaks to find and repair.



Puddling the leak at Leawood sluice.

Photo: Martin Culley



FOX IN THE HOLE

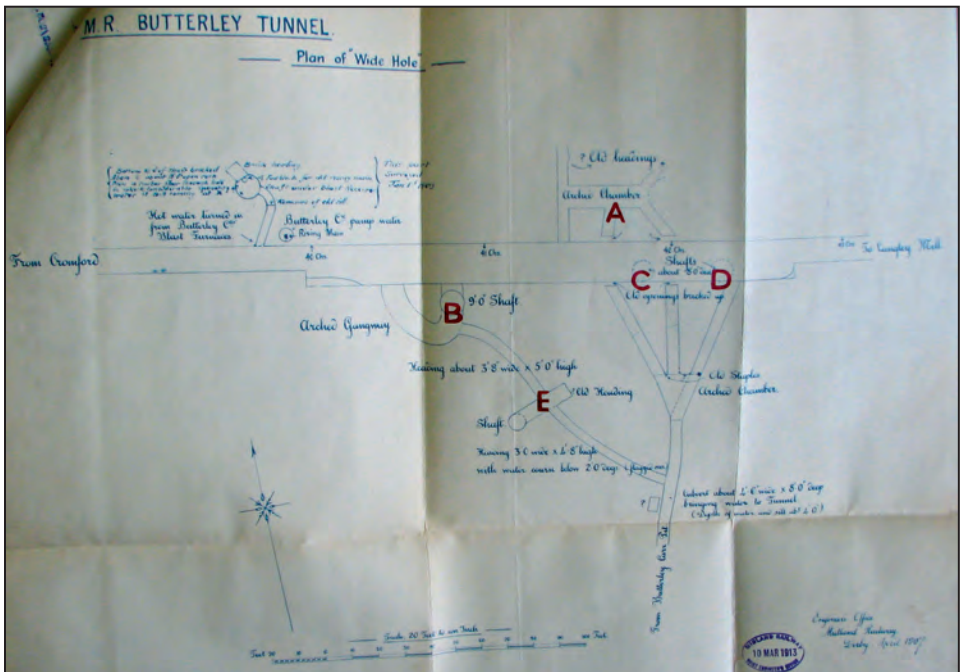
by Hugh Potter

Butterley Tunnel had an eminent visitor in the early 20th century

Chris Bradfield recently contacted me to enquire about an unnamed canal tunnel described in Sir Francis Fox's autobiography *Sixty-Three Years Of Engineering Scientific & Social Work*, published in 1924; he strongly suspected that this was Butterley Tunnel.

Derby-born Francis was responsible for

the bridges over the Victoria Falls on the Zambesi and Sydney Harbour, the Mersey Railway Tunnel, the Liverpool Overhead Railway, extending the London Underground and, it seems, inspecting the Cromford Canal! He was knighted in 1912 – although probably not for his canal visit.



A drawing of the Wide Hole (north towards the top), where Fox's party disembarked to view the water running into the tunnel, dated just a month after the visit (the date stamp is 1913 but the original date is April 1907). They almost certainly got off at the 'Arched Gangway' (B) and walked along the heading to the south-east. The 'crossing' referred to where the rather timorous Fox turned back is probably at E. Although the party seemed unsure of the origin of the water running north down the culvert into the tunnel (at 'D'), it is clearly labelled "From Butterley Carr Pit". This 'level' is sometimes mentioned as once having had small boats on it carrying coal from Carr Pit to the main tunnel. The 'Gas Hole' mentioned is the inlet shown (but not named) just to the west of the Wide Hole.

Fox's Recollections

This is what Fox recalls in his book:

"The tunnel is, I think, unique, and the visit of inspection which I made to it was not devoid of personal risk.

"It was made at the end of the 18th century in order to carry a canal under rising ground, and also to enable water-borne coal, iron ore, and limestone to be delivered to some blast furnace. The works were connected by a vertical shaft to an underground quay known as the 'Wide Hole' some 900 yards from the western portal of the tunnel. The total length is 3,080 yards, and its width is 9ft, except at the 'Wide Hole', where the width is increased to allow barges to get past others lying at the quay.



Simon Waller's artistic reconstruction of the western entrance to the Wide Hole. The arch on the left would be where the party left on foot to explore the water channel.

"The canal is the property of one of the main trunk lines of the kingdom. During the 130-odd years which have elapsed since it was constructed, thick seams of coal lying at a considerable depth below it have been and are still being worked, and it was desirable to know to what extent the canal was impassable. Not only can traffic no longer pass through, but the brick walls and side arches have been crushed and destroyed.

"Our visit took place on 12th March, 1907.

The last barge had passed through the tunnel about 1901. The barges are normally 7ft beam, but owing to the distortion of the tunnel it was found necessary to provide a chain and screw-coupling from gunwale to gunwale across the boat to make it still narrower than 7ft. Otherwise it would not have passed the contorted walls. [*In fact these were standard fittings in narrow boats – Ed.*]

"The railway company warned us that it was dangerous to enter the tunnel and that they would not be responsible if any accident happened to us. We afterwards heard that they had considerably placed a man at the top of each of the shafts which had not fallen in, to see if we had passed, so that in case of an accident they could raise the alarm.

[*Shades of Standedge Tunnel on the Huddersfield Narrow today – Ed.*]

"From the west entrance we went in 1,200 yards, the arch getting worse and worse, until eventually we found that the tunnel and the shafts had collapsed. From the east portal we were able to proceed for 800 yards, propelled by two men lying on their sides in the bow of the boat, back to back, and walking or 'legging' on the side walls of the arch. At last we reached a point where the men asked us not to let the boat bump against the side walls for fear that they would fall in. Touching the roof of the tunnel gently with my stick I dislodged a

small portion of the arch which fell into the boat. From this point for the remaining length of 1,080 yards both tunnel and shafts had caved in and we could go no farther.

"It was with small reluctance, having fulfilled the object of our visit, that we returned to the open air, and exchanged a blue sunny sky for the roof of a collapsing tunnel. I confess that I shared the feelings of my host, when on returning he greeted me with the words, 'I am relieved to see you again'."

So there is no doubt that it was our very own Butterley Tunnel which caused this highly respected engineer such a scare, five years before he was knighted!

From the Archives

The FCC's own archives include copies of letters from this time which not only confirm Fox's visit but expand on it. In 1907 Francis Fox was invited by the Butterley Co (BC) to inspect the tunnel, which the Midland Railway (MR) was then trying to permanently close following the collapse of July 1900.

In our increasingly litigious world it is hard to believe that BC were forever complaining to MR about water getting into their mines, and demanding MR (as owners of the canal) fix it. What seems unfair is that the problems had all been caused by BC themselves mining beneath the tunnel, but they could not be held responsible for their actions and, indeed, could sue MR for damages!

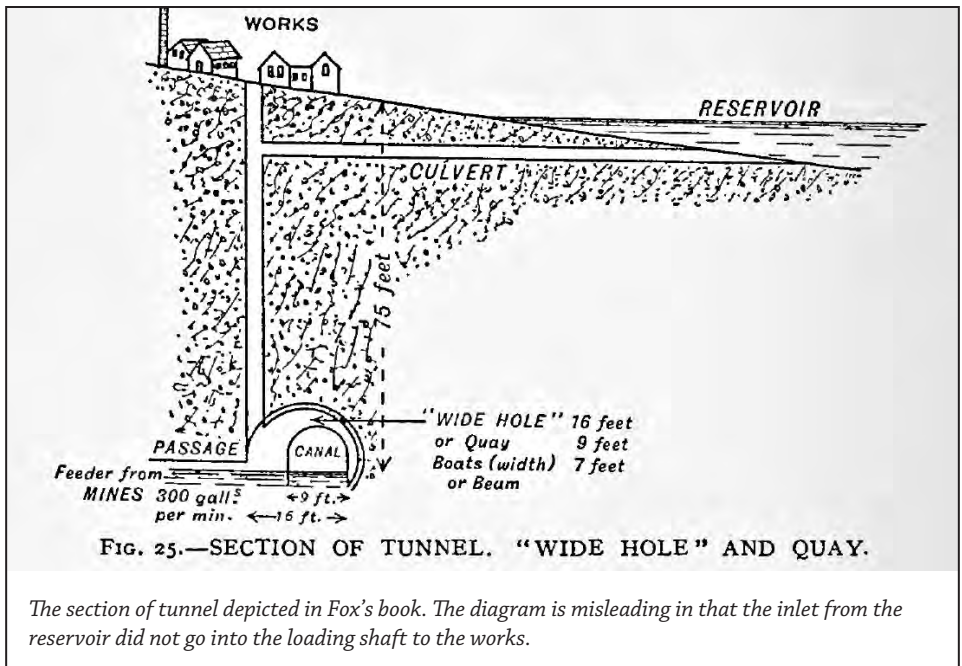
The standing of Francis Fox suggests that BC were sparing no expense in proving their case against the MR.

The Report of the Inspection

Fox's visit is recorded in a MR letter of 12th March 1907 from F. Johnson to J. Argyle, both of the MR:

"Today, I met the Butterley Co's representatives at the west end of Butterley Tunnel along with a Mr Holbrook, the Heanor UDC Surveyor. Mr Mitton and Mr Francis Fox completed their party and we entered the tunnel at 10.20am. Inspector Harrison accompanied me, as a witness, and to make corroborative notes; also ganger Bradley and labourer A. [Amos] White to propel boat.

"Mr Mitton, at the outset, said that he had asked Mr Holbrook, who was their surveyor, to go in so that he (Mr M) might shew him where the water came along the culvert at the end of the 'Wide Hole'. Nothing worthy of note occurred between the entrance and the Butterley Reservoir outlet at 23ch 10ft, excepting that Mr Fox remarked on the bad state of the roof between 5ch and 11ch [the abbreviation 'ch' stands for 'chain', a surveyor's unit of measure equal to 22 yards,



or just over 20m].

“The next point noted by them was the ‘Gas Hole’ where Mr M explained that water was turned into our canal from their works. We then entered the ‘Wide Hole’ where Messrs Mitton, Fox, Holbrook and myself left the boat, accompanied by Bradley with lights, and traversed the culvert leading to the one recently found carrying water. Mr Fox did not accompany us further than the end of the first 12 yards, where the cross-track intersects, he remarking that there was no necessity for him to go further.

“Mr Holbrook was shewn the water referred to. Mr Mitton here said that they were still searching for the source of this water but could not locate it, but he was inclined to think it was coming from their mines; also that the quantity was great and in the case of the tunnel being closed it possibly might dam back and so get into their workings. In the meantime they were getting all the information they could on the matter, and were going to discuss it with Mr Worthington [of MR].

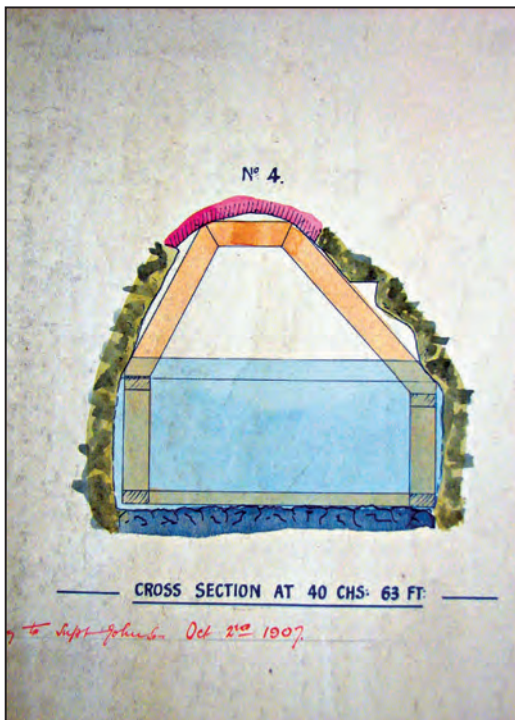
“We then returned and rejoined Mr Fox in the boat to continue our journey, but only reached the 51ch point as Mr Fox said he did not want to go any further. This is where the roof commences to show plain signs of the present settlement. Mr Fox here asked where the collapse was situated, also the position of the No.2 shaft and I told him.

“We then returned and on the way Mr Mitton asked whether it was possible to see through from end to end. I said it was so, before the collapse but not since. In passing through the ‘Wide Hole’ the depth of water at Mr M’s desire was tested and found to be 4ft 5in in the boat track.

“We reached the tunnel end at 11.40am, having been inside 1hr 20 mins.

“We entered the east end at 2pm, with Bradley and White again in charge of the boat. Mr Bishop pointed out to Mr Fox the outlet culvert from their pumping engine, at 13ch 47ft 6in from the east end and in answering

Mr Fox’s enquiry as to quantity pumped in, said that it was about 200,000 gallons per day. We then went forward as far as 37½ch which is practically at the point where the coal appears in the roof. The brick arching of the roof close to this was badly cracked and appeared a deal worse than when we were



One of many drawings of timbers placed to support the arch where Fox recalls “the brick walls and side arches have been crushed and destroyed”.

there on the 27th February. Mr Fox here said he had seen quite enough and we returned. We reached the entrance at 2.40pm.”

The End

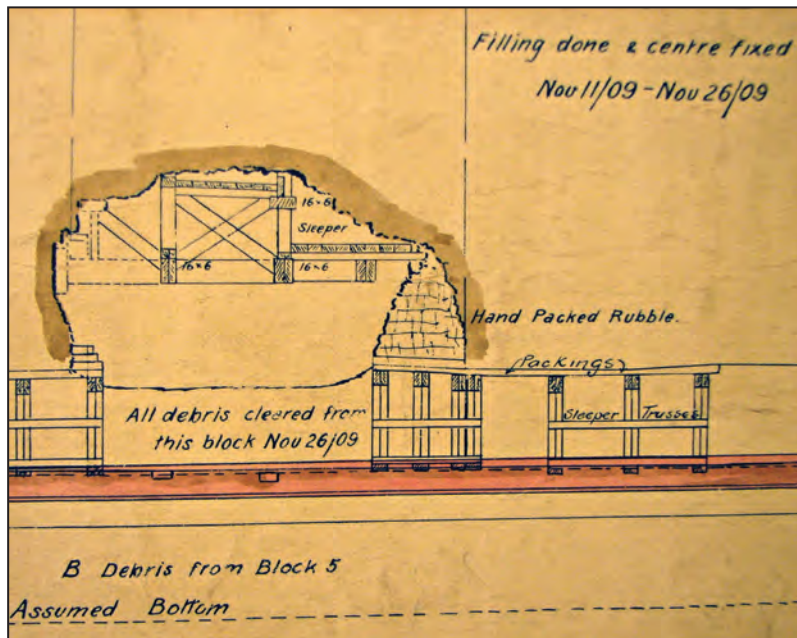
It is very satisfying to find two interpretations of the same event from different authors and to observe the subtle differences. But in the end, the MR got their way and did not have to reopen the tunnel for navigation.



TUNNEL TALES – PART 5

by Dave Ratner

The story continues from Portal 63



A drawing of a large roof fall in 1909 showing the extent of the damage and the repairs that were carried out.

Butterley Tunnel seems to have been plagued with problems almost from the outset. The earliest record available (at the time of writing) is of a dispute in 1838 between the Butterley Company (BC) and the Cromford Canal Company (CCC) regarding claims. BC claimed not to have been paid for coal left for the protection of the canal and made counter-claims of leakage from it. CCC claimed 'injuries' to the canal. Witnesses at this hearing talk of "brickwork being very decayed" and "doing their best, despite the brickwork being very old"! This was in 1826, a mere 30 years since its construction. The 'injuries' are hardly surprising as other witnesses talk of undermining part of the tunnel and supporting it with dirt!

At some point, witnesses mention reaching

the coal at 150ft depth: "We had got partly under the canal when we stopped the works the second time." And "It may be seen upon the plan that we had got a considerable distance under the tunnel; the dialling shows it". There also seems to have been a lack of understanding by the miners that coal bought by CCC was to be left under the canal, because the miners felt that if it was there, they should mine it!

Reference is regularly made to a plan of the area in dispute. It is assumed, from various mentions, that it shows sections of the canal where the mine workings are. It is understood that coal was excavated almost up to and alongside the tunnel itself when work was stopped. A passage (heading) was made beneath the tunnel to reach the coal on the

south side of the canal and mining began again about 28–30 yards beyond the line of the tunnel. So if the mining on the north side was closer to the tunnel, this might explain the leaning of the tunnel towards the north side as seen by visitors to the tunnel in recent times.

The earliest correspondence we have from the Midland Railway (MR) is in 1884 when discussing a cave-in, which happened about 400 yards from the west end in the vicinity of No. 1 Shaft, just north of Hammersmith. The resultant depression above ground is described as being 24ft long, 40ft wide and 20ft deep. And since this has happened in Butterley's coal sidings they were keen to get it repaired.

Fitzherbert Wright told MR that when several similar subsidences occurred, BC offered MR the "use of several men from their collieries skilled in the securing and relining of roadways".

In January 1892 a boat was sunk at this spot through a similar run-in (not the later collapse in 1900 which closed the tunnel). A considerable quantity of cinders had to be taken away (from the surface) before it could be stopped up. The hole was then filled in but it was the opinion of the MR engineer that cavitation was caused when it was filled with cinder blocks (later referred to as slag blocks) and that rain, making its way into the tunnel at this spot had dislodged them, breaking through the brickwork.

He goes on to say that "there are three rings of bricks in the arch and the tunnel has been raised twice through coal settlement and that settlement has brought the weight suddenly on the tunnel and crushed it in."

So, how would the miners have done the repair? The material from the cave-in would be taken out by boat. They would then have had to shore up the roof higher than the brick lining they were reconstructing and then back-fill over the top as they went. Bearing in mind the condition of the strata above, not a particularly safe occupation! Once the repaired section was completed they could

start to fill in the depression above ground.

Sometimes the tunnel caved in leaving a cavity above the canal but with no depression above ground. Having a look at some of the drawings from FCC's archive, there is one repair shown where a section of the roof has given way creating a cavity above the tunnel roof line.

The top of this cavity is more than 6ft high above tunnel roof height, is greater than the width of the tunnel and is around 16ft long! This is described as being block number 5. The roof cavity was not filled in but shored up with timbers. The effect would be like standing on the ground floor of a barn and looking up towards the rafters. Who's to say whether these supports are still there and in what condition? The section of drawing shows the collapse of 1909. It completely blocked the canal, and it was necessary to remove over 1,500 tons of material from the tunnel. It took from 11th to 26th November 1909. This might also be the site of a later collapse of July 1916.

Later, MR were really struggling to get the pipes laid in the tunnel and BC were not helping one bit by working the coal under the tunnel right through 1919.

A letter of 5th June 1925 from MR's John Argyle states that they "urgently need to get on with the tunnel repairs due to the imminent approach of the working of the Pentrich colliery".

So even while laying the pipes and carrying out repairs, the mining is still going on in the proximity of the tunnel.

Even as early as 1825-26 George Hunt, Pit Superintendent, talked of the pit approaching the tunnel. In one statement he says he was ordered to leave the coal a distance of 28 or 30 yards from the tunnel. He then goes on to say that after a delay of two or three months, they had got partly under the tunnel! But they had left a pillar of hard coal to protect it.

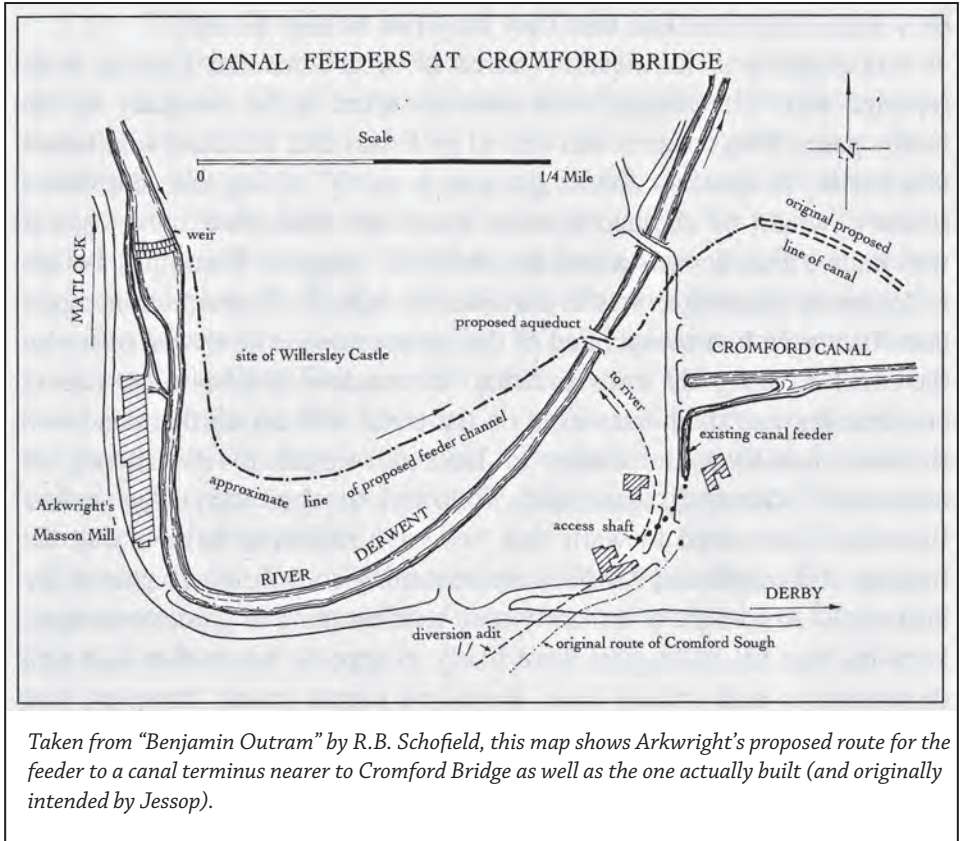
So it would seem a partial effort to protect the canal had been made, and once a passage had been made under the tunnel coal mining began again but at a greater distance from it.



ARKWRIGHT AND THE CROMFORD CANAL

by Hugh Potter

Sir Richard had an interesting relationship with the canal company



The daunting prospect of an interview for a new BBC4 series called 'Villages' (scheduled to be broadcast later this year) made me look more closely at Richard Arkwright's involvement with our canal, which has always been controversial.

At the outset, he had been invited to be a shareholder to lend credibility to the scheme and to encourage local investment, but he was soon commissioning attorneys to oppose

the bill unless amendments were made.

The original water supply was to be taken from Bonsall Brook and Cromford Sough after they had powered Arkwright's mills. But Arkwright declared himself against this, instead demanding a supply from the Derwent. This would have benefited him greatly; it would require raising Masson Dam by 16ft and feeding water via a landscaped channel across his land into the canal by an



Sir Richard Arkwright as portrayed by Joseph Wright, and on display in Derby Art Gallery.

aqueduct over the river (thus vastly improving his water supply at Masson Mills as well as his views from Willersley Castle, then being built).

He then had the audacity to ask the canal company to pay his legal expenses! In the end the canal committee gave in and included his plans alongside their original ones in the Bill before Parliament, although it seems they never intended to use Arkwright's scheme.

In the end the canal was built as originally intended, but they had to pay Arkwright heavily; the original amount of £1,535 in January 1791 was followed by a further £1,000 a year later. So he may not have got what he wanted, but he came out of it well financially. Sadly for him he did not live long enough to enjoy it, for he died in August 1792.

The descriptions of him from a variety of authors are both enlightening and consistent: frivolous; unreasonable; jealous; pettish; childish; petulant; unreliable; unpopular; selfish; boorish; self-interested; uncooperative; inconsistent. He "had whims"; "liked a touch of flattery"; "had no regard to consistency of character"; "had not so much milk of human kindness in him as the world would give him credit for"; "had frequent changes of mind"; and "plotted with opposition".

The richest commoner in England, perhaps – but not the best liked.



Ben Robinson (aka the Flying Archaeologist) being filmed for the lead-in to the canal section of 'Villages' that tells Arkwright's story.

Much of this information has been taken from "The Arkwrights: Spinners of Fortune" by R.S. Fitton and "Benjamin Outram" by R.B. Schofield.



IWPS CANAL SCHEME

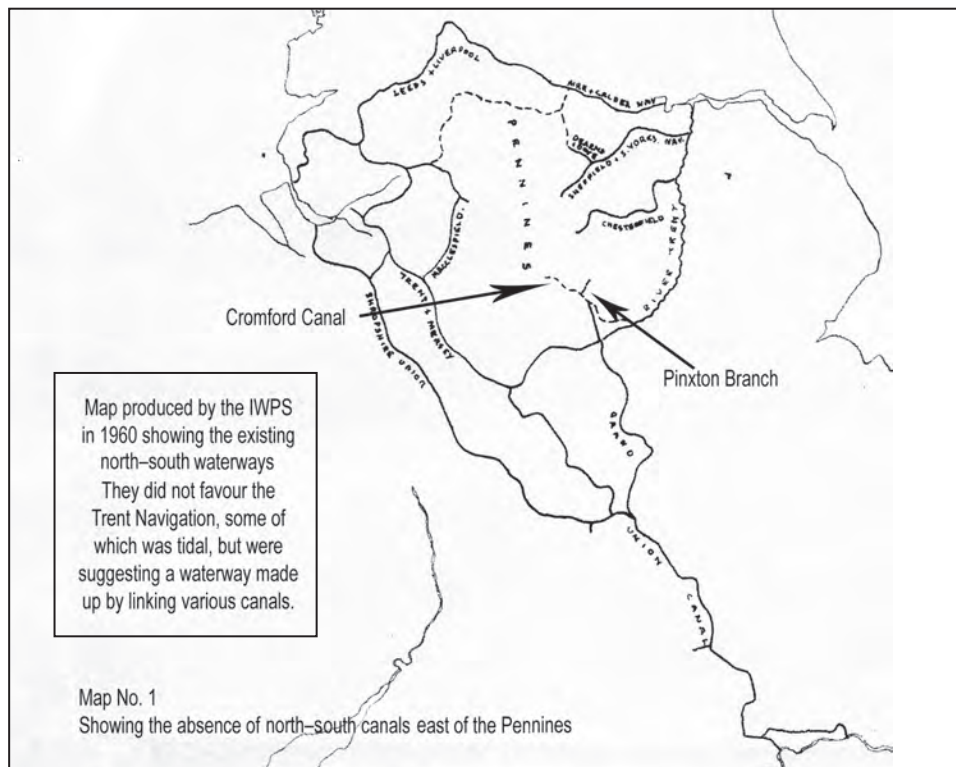
by Hugh Potter

FCC's Archivist looks at how the Cromford Canal could have been part of a high capacity barge route from Yorkshire to London

In 1960, the Inland Waterways Protection Society, which originated as a 'breakaway' group from the Inland Waterways Association, submitted plans for a major new waterway to the Inland Waterways Re-Development Advisory Committee. Having noted the absence of a major north-south inland freight waterway to the east of the Pennines, they proposed that two short new canals be built to link existing canals and rivers and thus provide a high capacity link that would relieve the congested road network.

The Proposed route was as follows:

From Leeds via Castleford to Wakefield, using the Main Line and the Wakefield Section of the Aire & Calder Navigation;
From Wakefield to Barnsley via the recently abandoned Barnsley Section of the Aire & Calder Navigation;
From Barnsley to Swinton via the Dearne & Dove Canal;
From Swinton to Rotherham via the Sheffield & South Yorkshire Navigation;
From Rotherham to Killamarsh via Proposed



New Cut No 1;

From Killamarsh to Chesterfield via the Chesterfield Canal;

From Chesterfield to the Pinxton Branch of the Cromford Canal via Proposed New Cut No 2;

From the Pinxton Branch to Langley Mill via the Cromford Canal;

Thence via the Erewash, Loughborough, Leicester, and Main Line Sections of the Grand Union Canal to London.

(The total distance was originally given as 205 miles, but amended by hand to 235 miles).

The description of the two proposed new cuts is given below in the original IWPS words:

New Cut No 1

(Rotherham to Killamarsh); 9 miles approx

From its confluence with the River Don at Bow Bridge, Rotherham, the first furlong of the River Rother is already a navigation used by barges of the Humber Keel type, the basic traffic being grain, to the Hovis Mills.

The New Cut involves further canalising the lower reaches of the River Rother for some 8 miles, then leaving the river valley at Killamarsh Meadows and, over a distance of about ½ mile rising some 40ft via one or more locks to the level of the existing Chesterfield Canal, joining into it about ¼ mile SE of Killamarsh Central Railway Station.

The land traversed is open industrial or meadow land, and no buildings are situated on the line of the proposed route. In certain cases bridges would have to be raised (hump-backs not necessary) and the river bed generally dredged. In any case, dredging is now overdue as large accumulations of industrial and other silt have, over the years, robbed the river of much of its effective cross-sectional area.

In times of heavy flood – as is the case on other river navigations – traffic might be temporarily stopped.

New Cut No 2

(Chesterfield to Pinxton); 14 miles approx

This Cut would serve to connect the termination of the Chesterfield Canal in Chesterfield with the Pinxton Branch of the Cromford Canal, so

providing continuity of the direct north to south (Leeds to London) canal on the east side of the Pennines. The Cut would be approximately 14 miles long and would pass through part of the heavily industrialised Coal Measures Belt of East Derbyshire with its mountainous stocks of unsold coal and coke. Is not this proposed Direct Canal the logical answer to the problem of providing cheaper delivered coal and coke – which is a sure boost to sales?

The Canal terminal basin at Chesterfield is on a canalised part of the River Rother just below the Midland Station. For about half its length the New Cut would be a continued canalisation of the course of the River Rother (with one short diversion, short-circuiting a loop under the main railway line at Parkhouse Colliery), but would leave the Rother valley at Padley Wood near Pilsley, then generally follow the main railway line in a S by E direction to join into an existing short arm in the Pinxton Branch of the Cromford Canal. A short tunnel (about ½ mile) together with approach cuttings would be required through the low hill S.E. of Alfreton. The Summit Level is envisaged on the 325ft contour over a distance of approximately 7 miles between a point a few furlongs S of North Wingfield church and a point SE by E of Alfreton. Potential feeder streams for this Summit Level include the Locko Brook, the River Rother from Pilsley, the Normanton Brook and the headstreams of the Alfreton Brook.

Existing feeder facilities for the Cromford Canal are considered to be satisfactory, the Summit Level (275ft contour) being on the same level as the Pinxton–Birchwood section of the New Cut. Again, the land traversed is mainly "open industrial" or meadow land together with very short sections of arable land. No buildings are situated on the line of the proposed route.

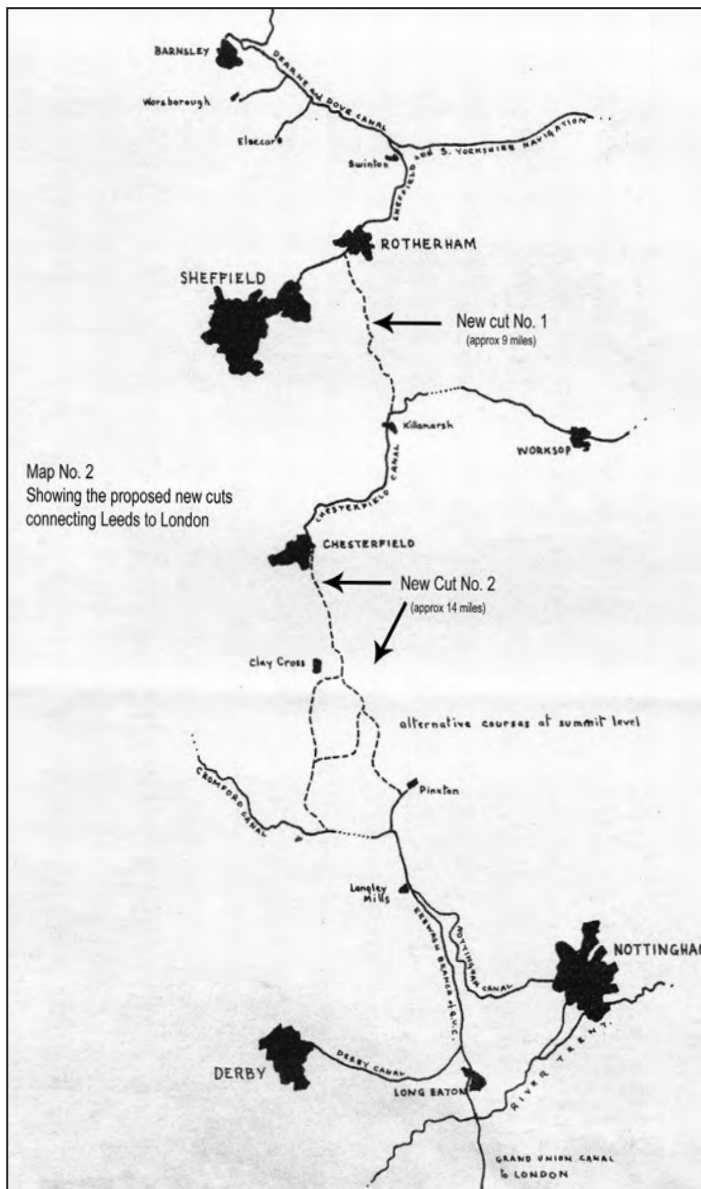
Déjà vu

One cannot fault the IWPS for enthusiasm, but for such a proposal to succeed in the 1960s, when traffic on most British inland waterways was in terminal decline, was rather unlikely. In

fact, the link between the Chesterfield and Cromford canals was nothing new. Back in 1824 there had been plans for a 'Grand Commercial Canal', which proposed such a link. Maps of two proposed routes exist, but both joined the Cromford Canal to the west of Butterley Tunnel: one at Buckland Hollow and one close to the western portal of the tunnel. The IWPS may have got their inspiration from these earlier schemes but if so they obviously realised that to join the Pinxton Arm, to the east of the tunnel, meant that boats would not be restricted by the 9ft width of Butterley Tunnel and a 'wide' (14ft) canal could be achieved throughout. They do however mark routes leading to the west of the tunnel as "alternative courses to the summit level". Interestingly, at no point do they mention the size of boats that might use their proposed canal.

This is perhaps understandable as this proposal would have suffered from the common problem of the British inland waterway system – variations in boat dimensions. On the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Navigation, maximum size is 15ft wide but restricted to 61ft length, whilst on

the relevant part of the Chesterfield Canal it is 70ft long but only 7ft wide, then on to the Cromford and we have 72ft long and 14ft wide. In any case, the route further south on the Grand Union Leicester Section is again restricted to 7ft wide.





WORK AT WHATSTANDWELL

by Hugh Potter

Major work is almost complete



As announced in the last issue of *Portal*, work began on the long-outstanding repair to the collapsed wall by Whatstandwell Road Bridge in late May. This has progressed and is due for completion at the end of September. These two pairs of photographs show the state of the wall immediately before work began and the



progress made by 5th September when long piles had been inserted to hold back the land above, the dressed stones of the canal wall reinstated exactly as they were before (below the temporary scaffolding walkway), and work begun on replacing the rougher stonework above them.





IN AND AROUND CROMFORD

by Vix Wilding

New products and places to go

In this issue of Portal I would like to take the opportunity to say 'Hello' to all of you followers and supporters. Also, a huge 'Thank you' for that continued financial contribution that has kept the FCC going over the last 16 years. When taking a trip on Birdswood we have been gathering the beginning of postcodes to help monitor our marketing efforts. What I have never asked, or recorded, is if passengers were members or not.

So, this is me asking for you to get in touch and let me know if you have travelled on Birdswood in the last 4 years. You can drop me a text on 07552 055455 or email at victoria@birdswood.org. I would love to hear any details about your experiences and photos if you would be so kind as to share. I'd like to add them to the next issue of the Portal for all to see and read about.

If you haven't already visited and are in the area, please come along and see for yourself the business the volunteers are continuing to develop on behalf of the FCC.

Every year we celebrate the efforts of the volunteers with a social event and this year it will coincide with the 80th birthday of Birdswood. It is to be held on 22nd November between 6pm and 9pm. Volunteers: watch out for your personal invite. There will be a special cake, pizza and nibbles. Alcoholic beverages will be available to purchase courtesy of The Hazy Horse Mobile Bar, which is one of our volunteers' daughter's business. So, if you are considering becoming a volunteer with the boat, shop or work party, now's the time to get started and get your invite!

New at the Shop!

Our delightful Canalside Shop and Ticket Office continues to support local artisans and stock a wide range of gifts, crafts and souvenirs.



A range of locally painted canalware is always available in the shop.

We have canal art painted watering cans, pots, jars, mirrors, spoons, mugs and each piece is unique. Liz Tatam continues to supply her home fired pottery from Ambergate. You can pick up, or order, coasters, jugs, bowls and other items depending on availability.

We also stock more unusual gifts like the Russian-made stacking dolls, magnets and toys.

Recently Sue Prince produced a wall-size folk painting of Birdswood being horse drawn. It's special to us as the crew and master in the image are actual volunteers involved. In fact, the master and his wife, in the bow doors, purchased the original!

There developed the idea to produce them as cards for everyone to have. We now stock these at just £2.50 each with all profits credited to Birdswood income. They can be purchased from the shop, boat or the online shop on our website www.birdswood.org.



Birdwood, horse and crew as seen by Sue Prince and now available as a greeting card.

This year we have also revamped our Christmas card offerings and now have packs of 10 of the same print or mixed packs with two of each design included. These packs are just £3 each and have a message inside with a pretty holly detail.

Why not pop into the shop sometime to check them out? It's at the road end of the Gothic Warehouse on Cromford Wharf and is open when Birdwood is running, which is normally Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, 10am to 4pm.



A range of locally made 'boozy' jams, packed with fruit, is a new line on sale in the shop [highly recommended – Ed!].

Around and About

I have decided to give you a little insight into some of the surrounding villages and places to visit in the following paragraphs.

Bonsall

Bonsall is a lovely and very active village on the edge of the stunning Peak District, a historic former lead mining village set in steeply converging limestone dales. Just up the hill from Cromford, Bonsall has a charming atmosphere; the Limestone Way runs through

the village which is surrounded by lovely countryside, lead mining caverns and caves, and even a defunct volcano! There are two pubs serving fine ales, one of which, the Barley Mow, is highly recommended for real ale and live music on Saturday evenings. The Kings Head is an ancient hostelry built in 1677 next to the fine stepped village cross.

The Fountain Tea Rooms opened in 2012 after a lengthy and thorough refurbishment into a welcoming tea room and bed & breakfast in the heart of the village. They have a relaxing atmosphere, with a log burner for winter warmth. Winter opening hours are 8.30am till 4.30pm. Downstairs is the traditional

tea room with a sun trap patio that makes the most of any fine weather; upstairs are two beautiful en suite B&B rooms.

The newly refurbished self-catering holiday apartment "Cobbles" to the rear of the house is available to rent, with a spacious king-size double bedroom, a twin room, and an open plan living/dining/kitchen area as well as a beautiful bathroom. Ask in the Tea Rooms if you would like to have a look round!

Adjacent, the Fountain Store and Deli sells a wide range of groceries and household supplies, cold meats and cheeses, bread, milk, newspapers, traditional jar sweets and local Thornbridge ales. More details at www.thefountainstore.co.uk.

Close by, Cascades is a spectacular 4-acre public garden, with a ruined corn mill, canal, stream, cliff and many waterfalls. It is only open from March to September, but there is also Cascades B&B, just across the road from the Fountain. The house dates back to 1823

and has a wealth of special features from the owner's travels to Tibet, India, China and Tanzania. More details from 01629 822813.

Whatstandwell

Breakfast or lunch can be obtained close to the canal from The Family Tree at Whatstandwell. This is a popular, licensed, family-run coffee lounge & tea room located on the banks of the River Derwent just off the A6. They offer breakfasts, lunches, afternoon tea, delicious home-made cakes and drinks.

National Stone Centre, Wirksworth

Just off the High Peak Trail, this is a great spot to stop for lunch at its new café, Gastro Pod within the Stone Centre. With suitable entertainment for all ages it's a little gem, excuse the pun! Run by a small group of volunteers and set within six former limestone quarries it features a 40-acre site of geological formations, offering outdoor and indoor activities for all.

Volunteers Needed

Sales Stand & Representation at Events

We are looking for members willing and able to attend local events to sell our books, souvenirs etc, spread the word about what we do and enrol new members. The person(s) would need to be able to transfer stock from the store at Cromford to and from the event as well as run the stand. We have a marquee, banners, stock and publicity material. Of course, this could be achieved by a small team, who could take on different responsibilities.

Publicity Officer

We desperately need someone to keep in touch with the local media – newspapers, television, social media, websites etc. Our monthly meetings need publicising, and there are a host of FCC achievements that the general public are unaware of because we do not have someone to send out press releases, or phone up local news desks. Those who actually make the achievements do not necessarily have the time or skill to tell others about them – could you do that?

Birdswood Crewing and Maintenance

We always on the lookout for new volunteers to help operate our passenger trip boat Birdswood at Cromford, but what we especially need is a team to do those little jobs that the regular crew does not have time for in between trips. Things like touching up paintwork, fixing the odd loose panel, mending a door lock, repairing a seat, improving the steps, cleaning the brasses. With up to forty people climbing onto and off Birdswood at least eight times a week, maintenance jobs constantly crop up; they are often small and unpredictable but much needed. Passengers notice little details and we want to give them the best possible experience. Earnings from Birdswood provides the FCC's main income stream. Could you help out with these little jobs?

Weighbridge Shop

Associated with Birdswood is the FCC shop on Cromford Wharf which opens when the boat is running (and more often if there are volunteers). We need more helpers in the shop to sell boat tickets and the other merchandise that is on display.

If you think you might be able to help out with any of these – or if you have any other specific skills to offer – please get in touch with volunteering@cromfordcanal.org. You could make all the difference to our success!



AUTUMN EVENTS

FCC social meetings take place on the third Monday of most months at 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall, Casson Street, Ironville NG16 5NN. Admission is £2 and there is a bar, raffle, tea and coffee. All are welcome to attend.

For further details of Birdswood events phone 07552 055455 or check out the Facebook page.

Tuesday 2nd October

Lucy Gell workshop on Birdswood, "Monoprinting" 10am till 4pm with light lunch and refreshments £65.

Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th October

Horse-drawn boat trips from Cromford and High Peak Junction on Birdswood.

Monday 15th October

CRT's Heritage Approach to Conservation

Ruth Garratt will speak about Canal & River Trust's work on conserving their historic structures, with emphasis on the East Midlands and the Cromford Canal. 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall.

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th November

World Heritage Site Discovery Days

Join in the carnival atmosphere at Cromford Wharf for the annual Derwent Valley Mills WHS Discovery Days. There will be model boats – some accurate, some more fanciful – on the canal, miniature steam traction engines chuffing around the wharf offering trailer rides and the sound of the street organ; plus, Sunday only, the chance for younger visitors to try out a climbing wall, thanks to Acclimatize of Cromford. Inside the Gothic warehouse will be stalls and displays including rose and castle demonstrations, peg weaving, water colour paintings for sale, a historic slide display and the FCC sales stand offering a variety of gifts and cards. And it's all free (well, apart from purchases of course!).

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th November

Horse-drawn boat trips from Cromford and High Peak Junction on Birdswood. Your last

chance this year for a horse-drawn ride along the canal.

Monday 19th November

'New' Historic Photographs

FCC Archivist Hugh Potter will show some 'new' old photographs of the canal that he has acquired in the last few years. Audience participation will be welcomed! 7.30pm at Ironville Church Hall.

Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th November

Pots & Pix

This is an annual opportunity to check out the FCC Archives and see slide shows of some of the latest acquisitions. It is held at the Archivist's canalside house in Ambergate alongside an exhibition of Liz Tatam's hand-thrown pottery (as seen in the Weighbridge shop). It will be open 11am to 5pm each day and further details are available at www.canalsidepotters.co.uk or call 01773 852009.

Santa Specials

One of the most popular places to see Santa is on board Birdswood, which he visits every year. This year trips depart at 12 noon and 2pm on weekends throughout December (1st & 2nd, 8th & 9th, 15th & 16th, 22nd & 23rd) with an additional trip on Thursday 20th. There are seasonal refreshments for everybody and, of course, presents from Santa for the children.

Bookings can be made via 07552 055 455; sales@birdswood.org; www.birdswood.org.

Under 5 years: £7; 5 years and over: £10.

Don't miss the Early Bird Special of £1 off tickets for the first weekend of December only.



Chernobyl Children Life Line (Pinxton & East Derbyshire Link)

"Offering Hope to Live"

**Celebrating over 20 years of help to the children
affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster**



**Presented with sincere thanks to
Friends of the Cromford Canal
in recognition and appreciation of
the continued and much valued
help and support given to the
children from the Chernobyl
affected region during their stay
in the East Derbyshire area.**

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Awarded Belarus highest order
Frantsysk Skaryna**

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**Dennis Vystavkin MSc (Hons) MSc
Chief Executive
Chernobyl Children Life Line
Summer 2018**

